

Testimony of Marissa Crean
Alzheimer's Association Connecticut Chapter
Submitted to the Appropriations Committee
Wednesday February 23, 2022

Honorable Chairmen, Ranking Members, and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Marissa Crean and I am a volunteer for the Alzheimer's Association CT Chapter and Chair of their Public Policy and Advocacy Committee. The Alzheimer's Association leads the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia — by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023 regarding the Alzheimer's State Respite Program.

Currently there are 80,000 people in Connecticut living with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia. The Alzheimer's Association estimates that this number will rise to 91,000 people by 2025.

More than 80% of the help provided to older adults in the United States comes from family members, friends, or other unpaid caregivers — and nearly half of families caring for an older adult are caring for someone with dementia.

When someone is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or other related dementia, they are at the beginning of a long and challenging journey for both themselves and their caregiver, and as the disease progresses, it becomes ever more emotionally and physically challenging for the caregiver. Caregivers watch their loved one's mental and physical capacity decline, sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly, and are compelled to make up the difference in their abilities. When simple requests or directions become confusing, caregivers explain repeatedly, help execute the task or just do it themselves. Alzheimer's patients eventually cannot be left alone for any length of time for fear of hurting themselves, and thus caregivers often quit their jobs and sacrifice their family's financial stability to take care of their loved one. They sacrifice their own health and personal care needs for their loved one.

Respite services provide temporary, substitute care that gives the caregiver a break from his or her caregiving duties. The services can be provided in a variety of settings, including the individual's home, assisted living facilities, and nursing homes. This temporary relief enables caregivers to ensure their loved ones continue to receive quality care while giving themselves an opportunity to manage and improve their own health which is often compromised. Caregivers of people with dementia are twice as likely to report substantial emotional, financial, and physical difficulties as caregivers of people without dementia.

Over my many years volunteering for the Alzheimer's Association I have seen families impacted struggle to care for their loved one at home without supportive services. Respite services are a lifeline to support our caregivers and expanding access to this is vitally important to support the growing number of people in Connecticut who will be affected in the future as our population ages.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide comment today.